

CHAPTER 32

Al-Sajdah: The Adoration

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 3 *sections*; 30 *verses*)

The name of this chapter, *al-Sajdah*, or *the Adoration*, is taken from v. 15 where the faithful are spoken of as falling down in adoration when the Divine messages are recited to them. It contains not only a prophecy relating to the immediate triumph of Islâm but also another relating to the distant future (verse 5). The first section foretells the establishment of Islâm; the second speaks of a punishment for the opponents in this very life; and the third of the raising of the dead earth to life.

SECTION 1: **Islâm will be established**

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 *alif lâm mîm*

2 The revelation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, is from the *Rabb* of the worlds.

3 Or do they say: He has forged it? Nay, it is the Truth from your *Rabb* that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you that they may walk aright.^a

4 Allâh is He Who created the *samâwât* and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is established on the Throne of Power. You have not besides Him a guardian or an intercessor. Will you not then mind?

3a. Makkah had not seen a prophet before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad, who was the only Prophet raised among the descendants of Ismâ‘îl.

5 He orders the Affair from the *samâ’* to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count.^a

6 Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Mighty, the Merciful,

7 Who made beautiful everything that He created, and He began the creation of human beings from dust.^a

8 Then He made his progeny of an extract, of worthless water.

9 Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His *rûh*,^a and gave you ears and eyes and hearts; little it is that you give thanks!

5a. *Al-Amr* or *the Affair* is the Affair of Islam, and its ordering or regulation from heaven to earth means that it comes from heaven and will be established firmly on earth. Then we are told that it will ascend to God in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years according to human reckoning, which means that it will receive a set-back for a thousand years. As regards the period of its firmness, we are told in a hadîth that it will retain its purity for three centuries: “The best of the generations is my generation, then those who follow them, then those who follow them, then after them will come people who will pride themselves in abundance of wealth and love plumpness” (*Al-Jâmi‘* (Hadîth), by Abû ‘Îsâ Muḥammad ibn ‘Îsâ *Tirmidhî* 31:39). According to another hadîth: “There will come a people in which there is no good” (*Kanaz al-‘Ummâl fî Sunani-l-Aqwâl wa-l-Af‘âl* (Hadîth), by Al-Shaikh ‘Alâ al-Dîn ‘Alî al-Muttaqî VI, 2068). The words of another are: “A crooked way — they are not of me nor am I of them” (*Kanaz al-‘Ummâl fî Sunani-l-Aqwâl wa-l-Af‘âl* (Hadîth), by Al-Shaikh ‘Alâ al-Dîn ‘Alî al-Muttaqî VI, 2073). That there is a prophecy here is shown by the next verse, which says, ‘*Such is the Knower of the unseen and the seen.*’ Thus we have here a prophecy relating to the future of Islâm. This prophecy was made known at a time when there was not the least indication that Islâm would be established in the earth; it was the middle of the Makkan period, when the cause of Islâm was utterly hopeless. At that time the Prophet was told that Islâm would be firmly established at first. That the cause would go on advancing for three centuries is made clear by the Prophet’s saying. After that the cause of Islâm would be chequered and it would have its set-backs, which would continue for a thousand years. The limitation of the period of chequering shows clearly that, after that, the advancement of Islâm will again be as unhampered as it was in its early stages in the time of the Prophet and after him.

7a. See 23:12– 14, where the various stages through which human beings passes in his or her creation are spoken of in detail, and 23:12a. The wonderful beauty of creation from the atom to the most brilliant star in the realm of matter, and from the smallest ant to the most developed form of life in human beings, could not have been known to an unlearned Arabian 1,300 years ago, yet he sees, as stated here, that everything that was created was beautiful. This beauty in creation undoubtedly emanated from the

same Source, from the Great Creator Who, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, has the “most beautiful names” (17:110; 20:8; 59:24).

9a. This verse shows that the spirit of God is breathed into every man. This points to a mystical relation between human nature and Divine nature. The word *rûh* does not here mean the animal essence of life, because the animal essence of life is common to human beings and the animal kingdom. It is something which distinguishes human beings from the animal world. It is due to this *spirit* Divine that he rules the creation and it is due to the same Divine spirit in him that he receives a new life after death — a life in which he lives in God and with God — the meeting with God or *liqa Allah*, as it is called in verse 10.

10 And they say: When we are lost in the earth, shall we then be in a new creation? Nay, they are disbelievers in the meeting with their *Rabb*.

11 Say: The *malik* of death, who is given charge of you, will cause you to die, then to your *Rabb* you will be returned.

SECTION 2: Believers and Disbelievers — a Comparison

12 And could you but see when the guilty hang their heads before their *Rabb*: Our *Rabb*, we have seen and heard, so send us back, we will do good; we are (now) certain.

13 And if We had pleased, We could have given every *nafs* its guidance, but the word from Me was just: I will certainly fill hell with the *jinn* and human beings together.^a

14 So taste, because you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours; surely We forsake you; and taste the abiding chastisement for what you did.

13a. Allâh's word, as repeated so often in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, is that the right way has been pointed out to human beings but he or she is given the choice to accept or reject it, and that those who rejected that word and did not forsake evil ways would go to hell. The reference in *if We had pleased* is to the fact that human beings is not compelled to submit to the Divine law. His superiority lies in the fact that he or she has been given a choice. If he exercises that choice rightly, he or she attains to eminence; if he or she exercises it wrongly, he or she must taste of the evil consequences of their deeds.

15 Only they believe in Our messages who, when they are reminded of them, fall down prostrate and celebrate the praise of their *Rabb*, and they are not proud.^a

Prostration

16 They forsake (their) beds, calling upon their *Rabb* in fear and in hope, and spend out of what We have given them.^a

17 So no *nafs* knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them: a reward for what they did.^a

18 Is he then, who is a believer, like him who is a transgressor? They are not equal.

19 As for those who believe and do good deeds, for them are Gardens, a refuge — an entertainment for what they did.

20 And as for those who transgress, their refuge is the Fire. Whenever they desire to go forth from it, they are brought back into it, and it is said to them: Taste the chastisement of the Fire, which you called a lie.

21 And certainly We will make them taste the nearer punishment before the greater chastisement, that haply they may turn.^a

15a. The recitation of this verse is followed by an actual prostration; see 7:206a.

16a. The literal significance of the original words for *they forsake* is *their sides draw away from*, showing that they are restless in their beds. These are the foundations of the culture of Islâm, passing part of the night in remembering Allâh, and passing the day in earning wealth to spend in the way of Allâh for the benefit of humanity.

17a. This is a true description of what the blessings of paradise are: *No nafs knows what refreshment of the eyes is hidden for them*. These blessings are hidden from the physical eye of human beings, and therefore their description in words which convey to the mind an idea of the blessings of this life is metaphorical. Words cannot reveal to us the real nature of those blessings. The Holy Prophet's own comment on these words show the truth of this statement, for he is reported to have said: "Allâh says, I have prepared for My righteous servants that which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and which the heart of human beings cannot conceive" (Bukhârî 59:8).

22 And who is more iniquitous than he who is reminded of the messages of his *Rabb*, then he turns away from them? Surely We exact retribution from the guilty.

SECTION 3: **Dead Earth will receive Life**

23 And We indeed gave Mûsâ the Book — so doubt not the meeting with Him — and We made it a guide for the Children of Isrâ'îl.^a

24 And We made from among them leaders to guide by Our command when they were patient. And they were certain of Our messages.

25 Surely your *Rabb* will judge between them on the day of Resurrection concerning that wherein they differed.

26 Is it not clear to them, how many of the generations, in whose abodes they go about, We destroyed before them? Surely there are signs in this. Will they not then hear?

27 See they not that We drive the water to a land having no herbage, then We bring forth thereby seed-produce, of which their cattle and they themselves eat. Will they not then see?

21a. By the *nearer* chastisement is meant the earthly punishment, which might serve as a warning against the greater punishment of the Hereafter. The opponents of Truth are thus told that they must taste a punishment in this life, too, and the description of it given in the previous verse — *whenever they desire to go forth from it, they are brought back into it* — manifestly apply to modern world conditions, when materialism has taken hold of the minds of human beings. The wars at present raging in the world are the fire of this life, and, however much the warring nations may desire to get out of them; they are brought back into them.

23a. To bring about the meeting with Allâh — to make human beings live in Allâh — is the real aim of *Dîn*, and here it is pointed out that to make human beings attain this object a Book was given to Mûsâ for the Isrâ'îlites, as a Book is now given for the whole world. This object will be attained notwithstanding opposition, which will be brought to naught, as made clear in verse 26.

28 And they say: When will this victory come, if you are truthful?^a

29 Say: On the day of victory the faith of those who (now) disbelieve will not profit them, nor will they be respited.

30 So turn away from them and wait, surely they too are waiting.

28a. The question makes it clear that the above verses speak of the triumph of Islâm over all opposition, then and now, in metaphorical language; hence they ask, when will the victory come? The driving of the water to a dead land, *a land having no herbage*, is a clear hint that the dead earth will receive life.